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# EDUCATIONAL CO-CREATION THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH ON EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

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# OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

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- Erasmus+ funded for three years
- Three countries – Norway, Denmark, UK
- Co-created with BA and MA students
- Year long project (1 week online, 2 weeks residential)
- Aimed to investigate the marginalization of 'ESL' and 'drop out' in each country
- An 'Indirect Approach' (Bunting and Moshuus, 2017)
- An 'Equalities Literacy' framework (Stuart et al., 2019)



# ESL CONTEXT

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- Characterised by “flawed and intolerable” language (Fine, 2017) – negative, deficit, blaming
- Three different school systems – between 13% and 27% ESL in secondary and between 6.2% and 40% ESL in higher education
- Invisible / accepted issue in society
- Educational inequality thriving in neoliberal meritocracy (Reay, 2017; Giroux, 2011; Wiederkehr et al., 2015)



# EQUALITIES LITERACY FRAMEWORK

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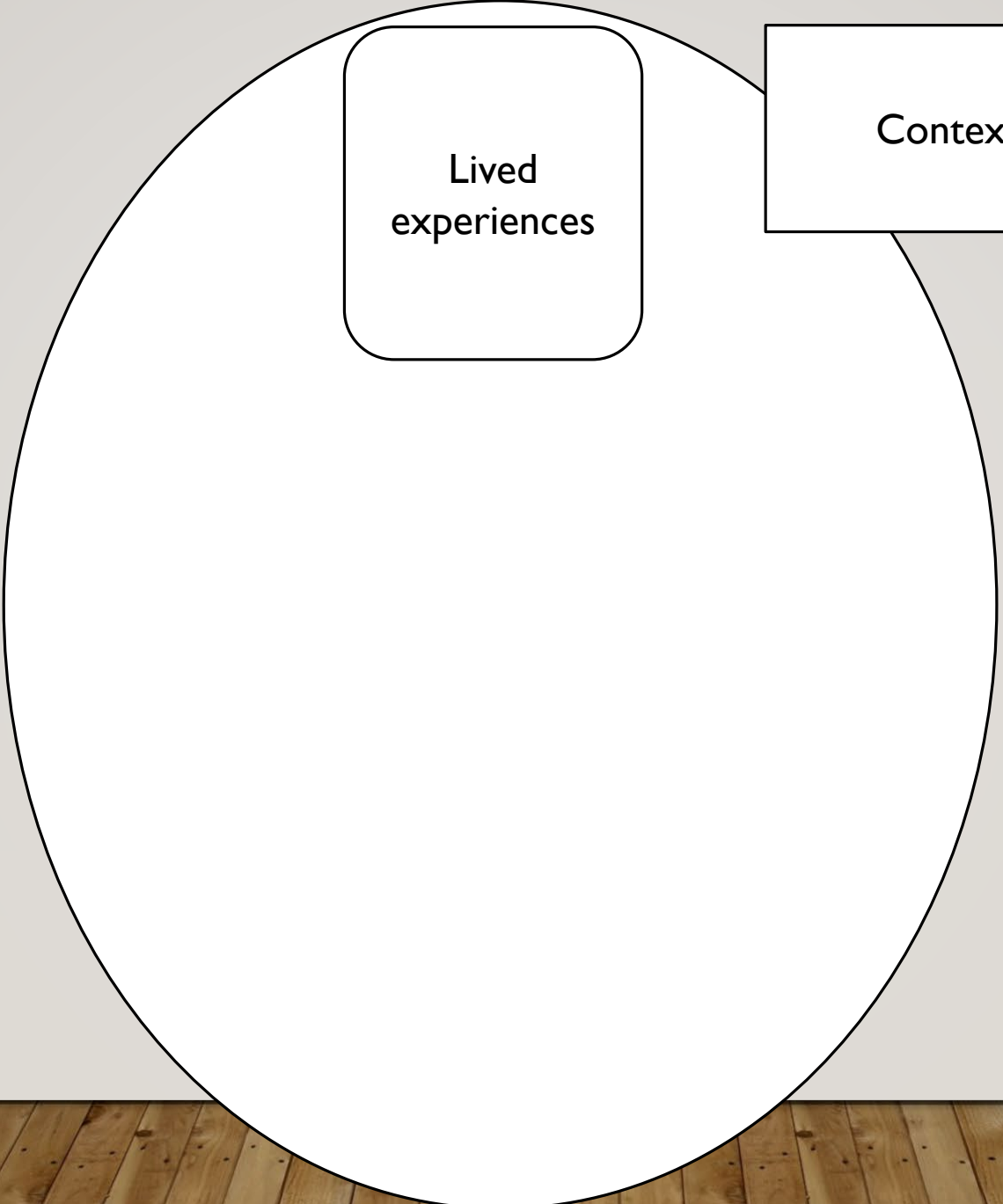
- Marginalisation and disadvantage exist in relation with inclusion and privilege, they are intertwined
- Investigating ESL and drop out also therefore, involves investigation of educational success





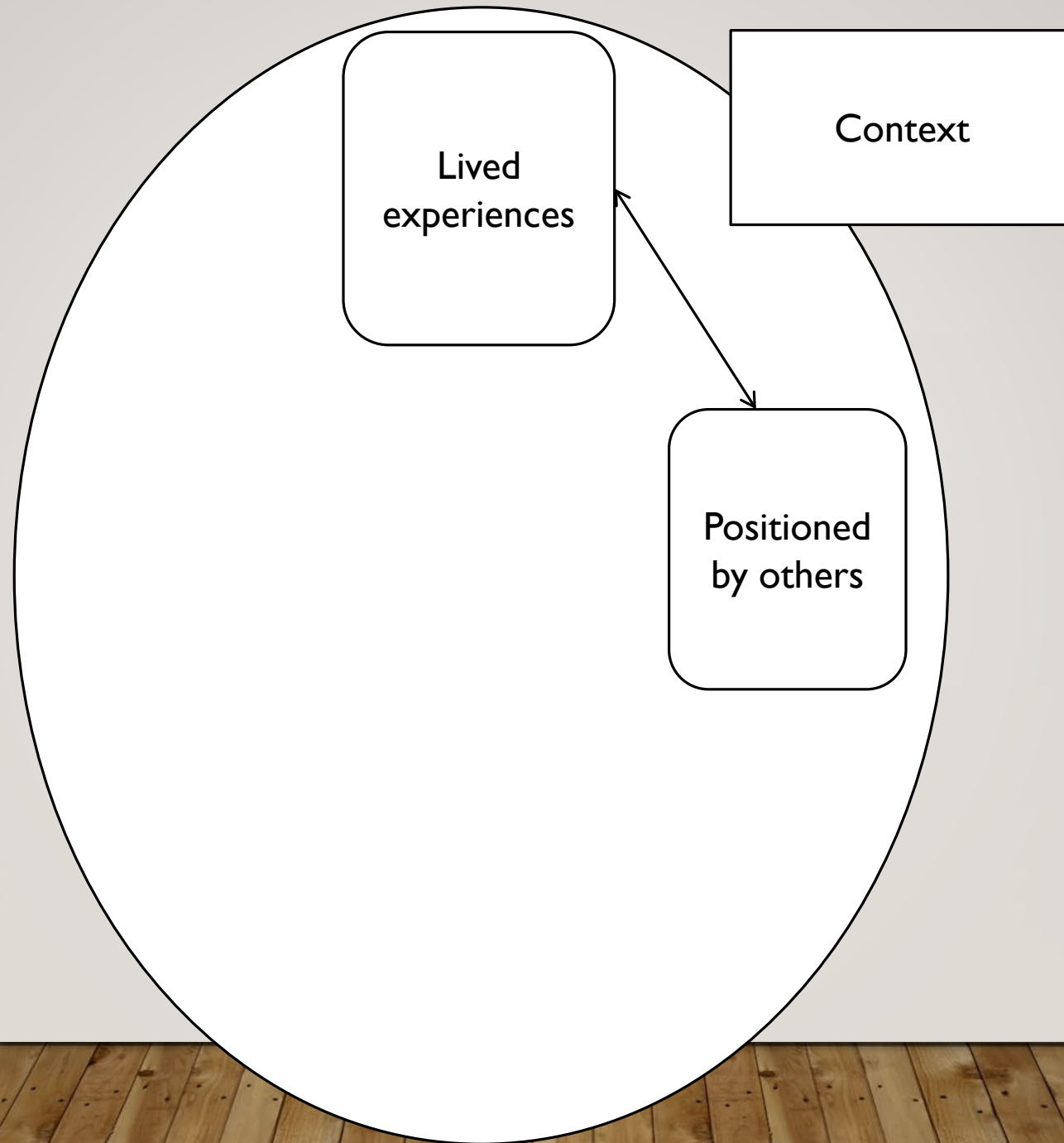
Context

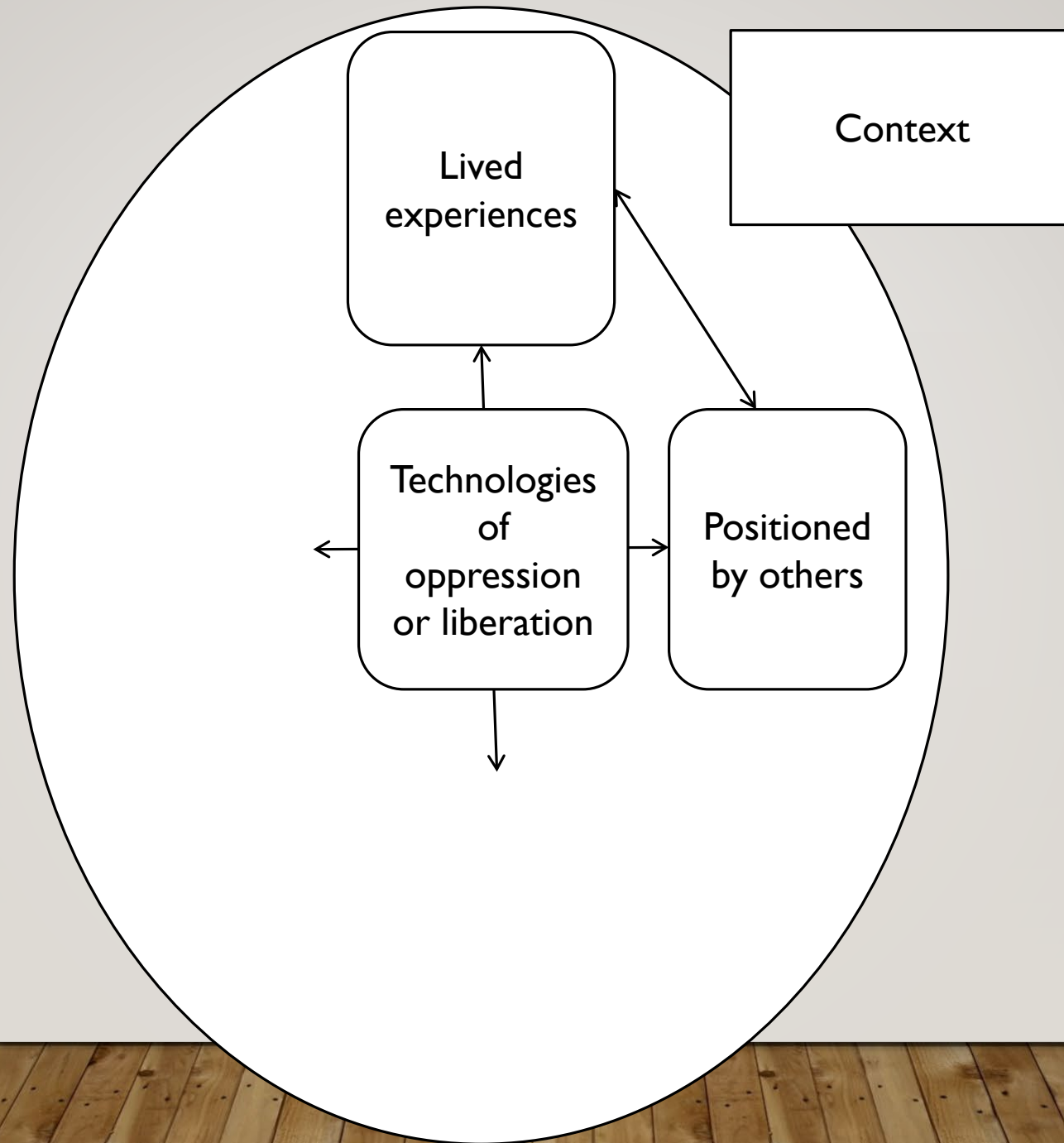




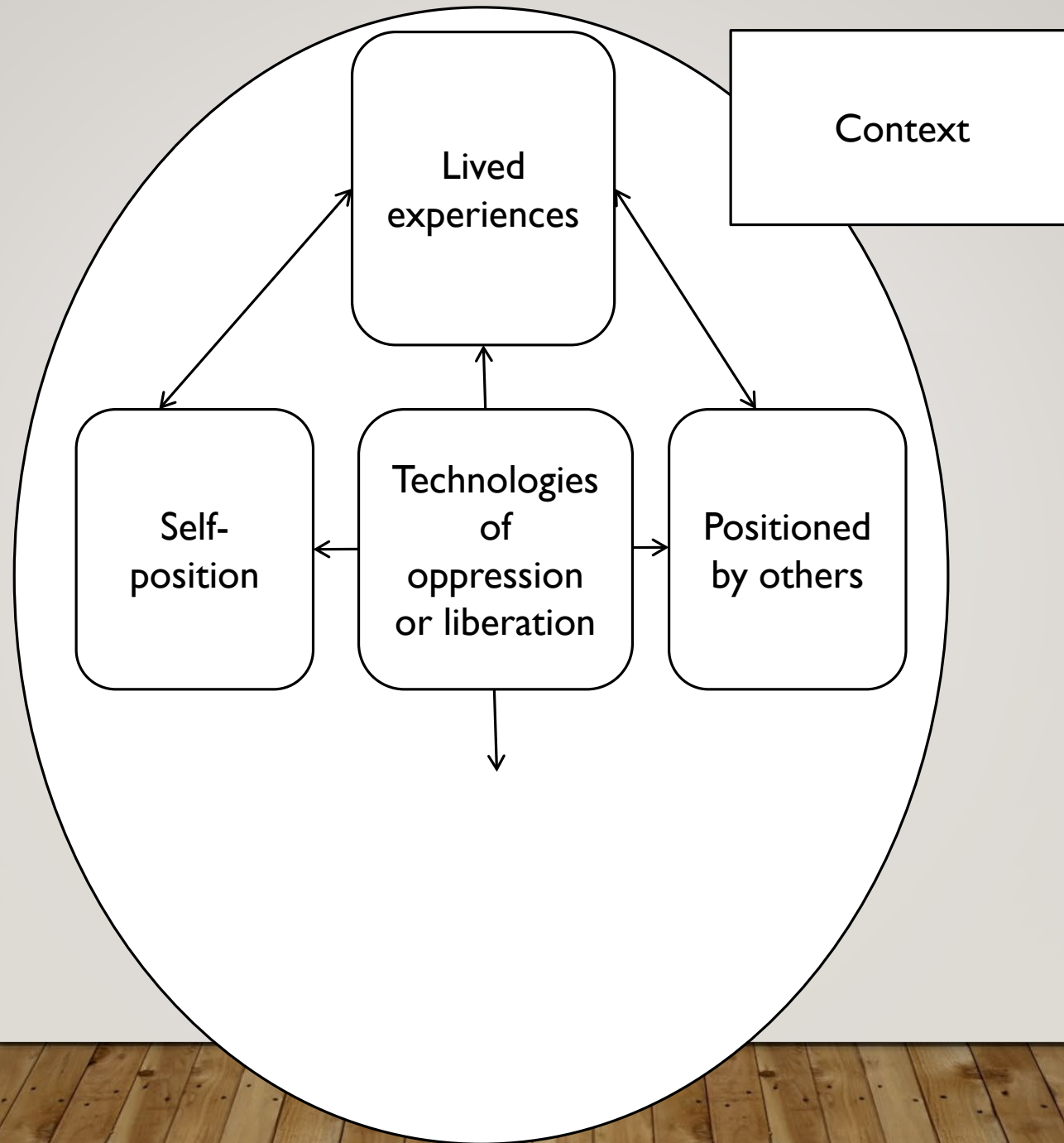
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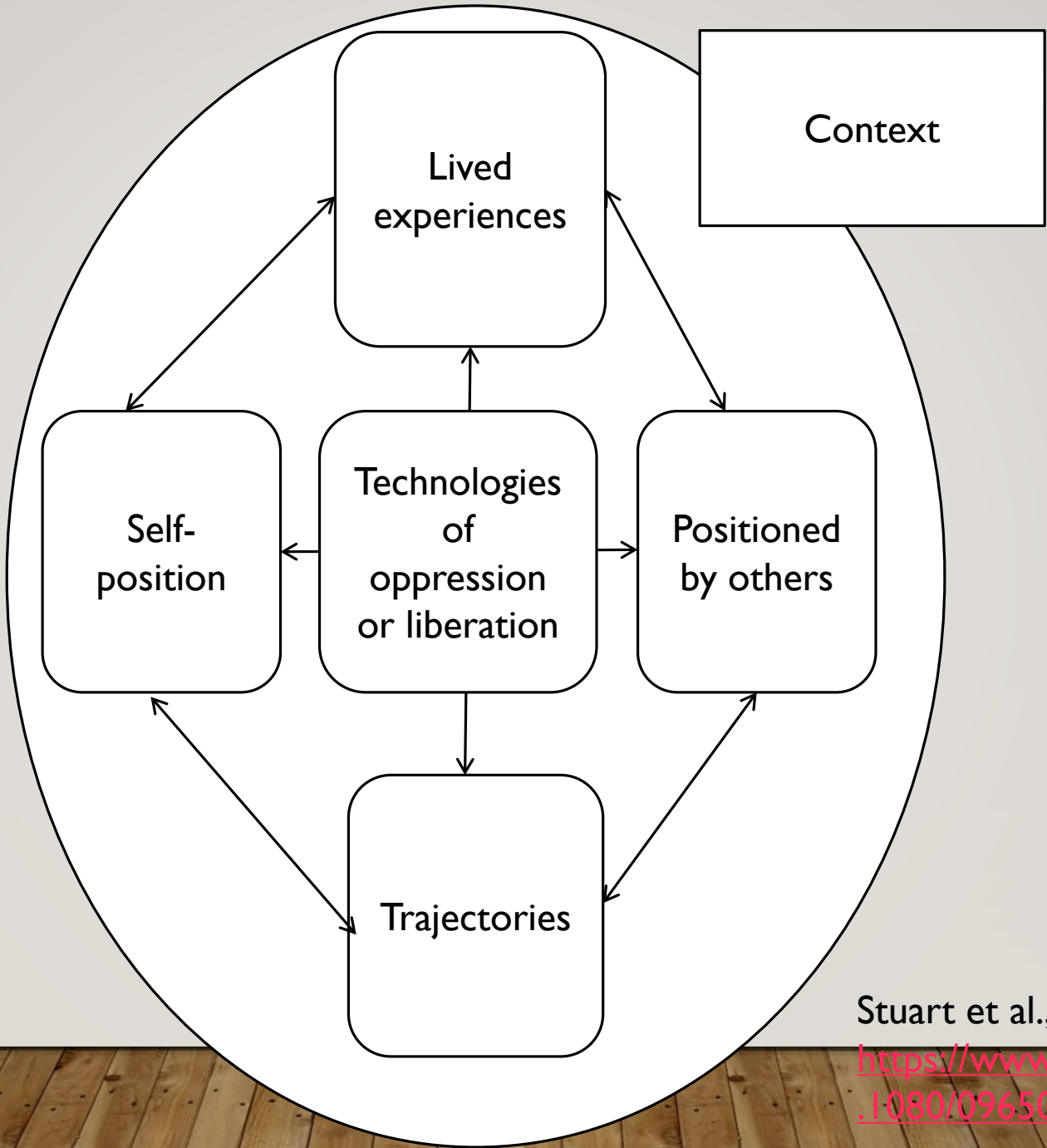
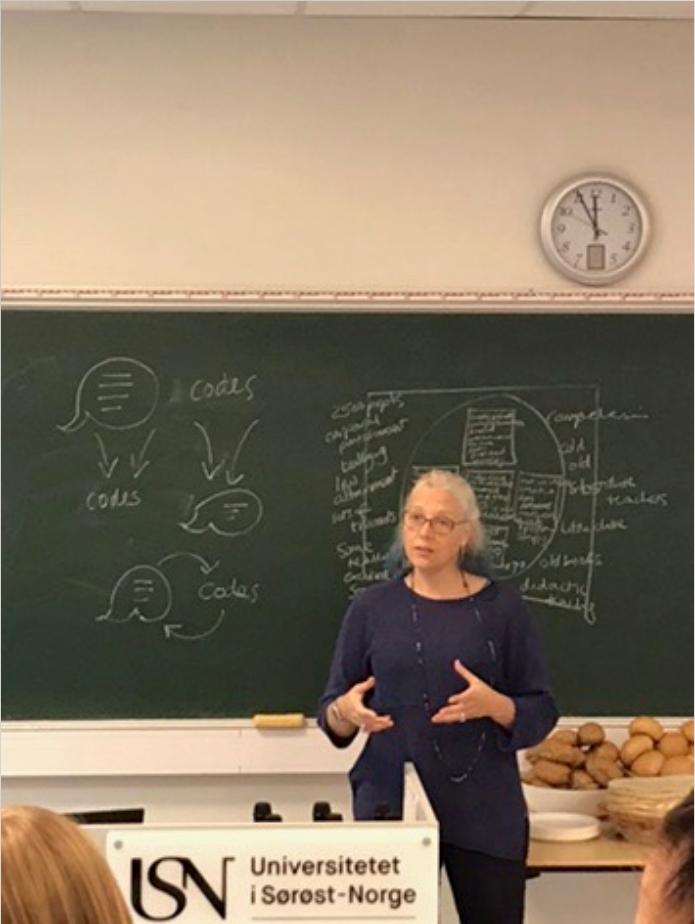
Context











Stuart et al., 2019

<https://www.randfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09650792.2019.1593870>

# METHODS

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- 40 academics, BA and MA students
- Sampled any young person willing to speak with us – overcame labelling through open sampling (100 participants)
- Ethical approval and consent organizational, parental, individual
- Indirect approach – a conversation without an agenda or questions
- Relaxed settings
- Transcribed, coded and abductively analysed by each member of the team



# FINDINGS

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- Drawn from the findings of the academics and researchers rather than a meta-analysis of all 100 interviews



# NORWAY

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- A range of personal issues affect young people's ability to thrive and feel secure in school
- Young people with mental health issues are not adequately supported in schools
- Young people with additional needs e.g. dyslexia are not adequately supported in schools
- Teachers are judgmental of pupils and pressure them to achieve highly this can negatively affect performance
- Boys who enjoy aesthetic experiences at home also enjoy these subjects at school unless bullying or bad relationships with teachers puts them off these studies

# DENMARK

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- A range of personal issues affect young people's ability to thrive and feel secure in school
- This led to isolation and adoption of an identity as a 'failure'
- Cycles of disadvantage are triggered by one school failure
- Pressure to achieve but no support to achieve
- Indirect approach could be useful as social work tool
- There are ethical issues to be managed with the indirect approach



# UK

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- A range of personal factors mitigate against school success but these can be overcome
- Young people feel commodified, education a 'machine'
- Teachers' perceptions of the young people significantly influence the young person's self-image. Teacher expectations were often at odds with the young person's expectations and interests
- Education reproduces social inequalities, however, an innate health approach may ameliorate these effects
- Relationships with teachers have a profound impact on pupils' achievements
- Young people experience extreme bullying and oppression in schools (peers and teachers)
- Issues dealt with in the short term – 'sticking plasters'

# A SPECTRUM OF WELFARISM

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Politics	Liberal		Neo-liberal
Country	Norway	Denmark	UK
Welfare approach	Most social issues addressed – welfarist approach	Support for welfare but eroded funding	Funding and empathy for welfare eroded
Impact on ESL	Considered unusual / impossible, high social stigma, high support to reintegrate	Unusual and unacceptable, some support to reintegrate	Hidden issues, undocumented, 'just deserts' approach

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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# THEME 1: MAKE ENVIRONMENTS STUDENT-CENTRED

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- A meaningful and relevant teaching and learning environment – co created
- Matched to the strengths and needs of pupils / students / young people
- Grounded in pupils / students / young people's passions and interests
- Flexible to pupils / students / young people's changing needs



Photo: Diku/Bjørn Harry Schønhaug



# THEME 2: EMBED A RELATIONAL APPROACH

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- Create wide and rich support networks
  - Improve the value and quality of relationships
  - Give time for pupils / students / young people to be themselves and to talk
  - Allow teachers / practitioners to be 'human'
  - Treat all people with equal respect through equitable practice
  - Enable individuality and collectivity



Photo: Diku/Bjørn Harry Schønhaug

# THEME 3: RADICAL PEDAGOGY

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- Practical, experiential, informal
- Culturally sensitive and relevant
- Balance social and academic needs with opportunities for play and mixing
- Appropriate levels of support
- Equitable practice
- Tackle inequality, oppression, marginalisation explicitly
- Provide time for critical exploration of the world
- Promote questioning and challenge
- Appropriate skilled use of technology
- Fun!





# THEME 4: GOVERNANCE

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- Reduce new public management and control and increase professionalism
- Decrease focus on statistics and evidence based practice and increase qualitative and practice based evidence paradigms
- Increase funding for resources and research with students
- Re-dress the site of blame to consider organisational aspects, not 'what is wrong with the young person / student'
- Pursue / sue people who use education / youth for their own goals



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